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MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads of All Fire Departments

FROM: Stephen D. Coan
State Fire Marshal

DATE: January 31, 2008

SUBJECT: MFIRS Changes

'New' MFIRS System Changes as of January 1, 2008

There are some changes in the system, many of which may cause 'Critical' errors that are coming with the latest release of MFIRS v5 on January 1, 2008. Any 'Critical' error in an incident will not allow that incident to be saved in the state database and has to be corrected and the entire incident resubmitted. We were instrumental in getting some of these changes made, so if you have any suggestions please be sure to pass them along. These changes were made at the national level to NFIRS by the USFA and all vendors have been made aware of them. If you have not received a recent update to your MFIRS software please speak to your software vendor.

The changes that will affect MFIRS users are:

1. *Incident Type* (Basic Module) 100 – *Fire, other*, will require a Fire Module. A 'Critical' error will result if a Fire Module is not present.
2. A new *Actions Taken* (Basic Module) code 87 – *Investigate fire out on arrival* has been added. It should be used for incidents where the fire department responds but the fire has already been extinguished.
3. A 'Critical' error will be generated for any age that is negative.
4. A new *Type of Material First Ignited* (Fire Module) code has been added = 28 – *Ethanol*.
5. Removed *Cause of Ignition* code (Fire Module) 0 – *Other*. A 'Critical' error will result if 0 is used.
6. If *Incident Type* (Basic Module) = 112 – *Fire in a structure other than a building*, the *Structure Type* (Structure Fire Module) cannot be 1 – *Enclosed building*, or 2 – *Fixed portable or mobile structure*. A 'Critical' error will result if either of these codes is used.
7. If *Property Use* (Basic Module) = 464 – *Barracks, dormitory*, then the *Mixed Use Property* (Basic Module) field is required to be completed. A 'Critical' error will result this condition is not met.

8. A new *Factors Contributing to Release* (HazMat Module) code has been added = 49 – *Criminal Activity*.
9. The description for *Building Status* (Structure Fire Module) code = 2 – from *Occupied & operating* has been changed to *In normal use* – includes properties that are closed or unoccupied for a short period of time, such as a business closed for the weekend or a house with no one at home.
10. A new *Equipment Involved in Ignition* (Fire Module) code has been added = 877 – *Novelty lighter*.
11. If *Arrival Time* (Basic Module) is greater than 20 minutes than the *Alarm Time* (Basic Module) than a ‘Warning’ error will be generated.

Building Status - Vacant vs. Non-Vacant

There seems to be some confusion as to what this field and its codes represent. The Building Status field defines the operational status of the building involved in the fire. Two of the codes for this field are: *Vacant & Secured* and *Vacant & Unsecured*. A vacant building is one that is not occupied at any time, not just at the time of the fire. It is usually an abandoned building or a building that does not have any occupants or businesses residing in it.

It does not include buildings such as storage units, and motor vehicle garages, or businesses after business hours with no one there. The code *In Normal Use* should be used for these scenarios. The code *Idle not Routinely Used* should be used for seasonal properties and those that are used on a ‘somewhat’ regular basis (e.g. Snack Stands or ticket booths at playgrounds or athletic fields) when they are not occupied and operating.

Need for Updated Reports

Departments need to submit updated MFIRS reports once investigators have completed their investigations. Whether your Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG’s) allow the fire investigator, the chief, deputy chief, or officer in command, to do this, the MFIRS report needs to be updated and then resubmitted (the next time incident reports are submitted) when anything new is discovered or an investigation is completed. This needs to be done even if the fire investigators are using another system other than MFIRS for their investigative reports. If you are working with outside investigators such as troopers from the OSFM’s Fire Investigation Unit, it is the fire department’s responsibility to contact them and inquire as to their results and update your MFIRS report accordingly. This is especially true for fatal or large loss fires.

FATAL OR LARGE LOSS FIRES

If you have a fire or explosion with a **fatality** or **large loss (>\$1,000,000)**, please forward a paper copy of the MFIRS report with a completed Remarks section to Derryl Dion within 2 business days. The report should include the Basic, Fire, Civilian Fire &/or Fire Service Casualty Module(s), and Structure Fire Module (needed for all structure fires). This most likely will be a preliminary report and you can file the complete report at a later date unless otherwise noted. Every effort should be taken to make sure that these reports are as complete as they can be given all of the information available at the end of your investigation.

ELECTRONIC REPORTING

The email address to send your electronic MFIRS reports to is: MFIRS.Report@state.ma.us. You should be submitting your reports on a monthly basis.

ASSISTANCE

Please contact Derryl Dion, Research Analyst/MFIRS Manager at (978) 567-3382 or Derryl.Dion@state.ma.us with any questions regarding MFIRS or to conduct fire data or histories research.